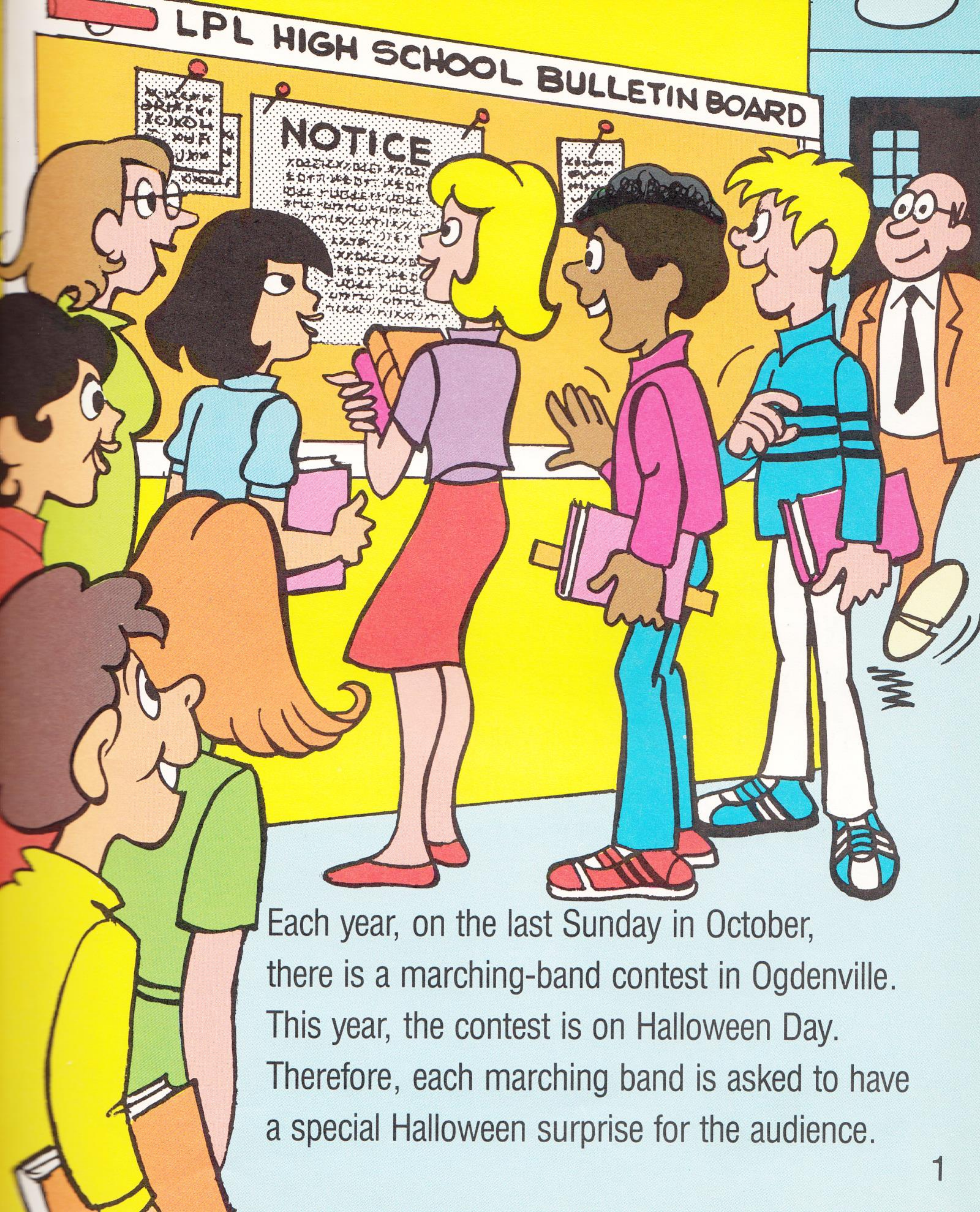


The OPTIMISTIC OPTIMIST

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Each year, on the last Sunday in October, there is a marching-band contest in Ogdenville. This year, the contest is on Halloween Day. Therefore, each marching band is asked to have a special Halloween surprise for the audience.

"The Letter People Land Band will not enter the marching-band contest this year," says the band leader.

"Why won't you enter?" asks the mayor.

"We never win an award," answers the band leader.

"And this year we have too many problems. We need new instruments. We need new uniforms. We need a special Halloween surprise."

"You certainly need many things," says the mayor.

"But, what you need most of all is Miss O."



“Who is Miss O?” asks the band leader.

“Does she sell instruments?

Does she make uniforms?

Does she have a special Halloween surprise?”

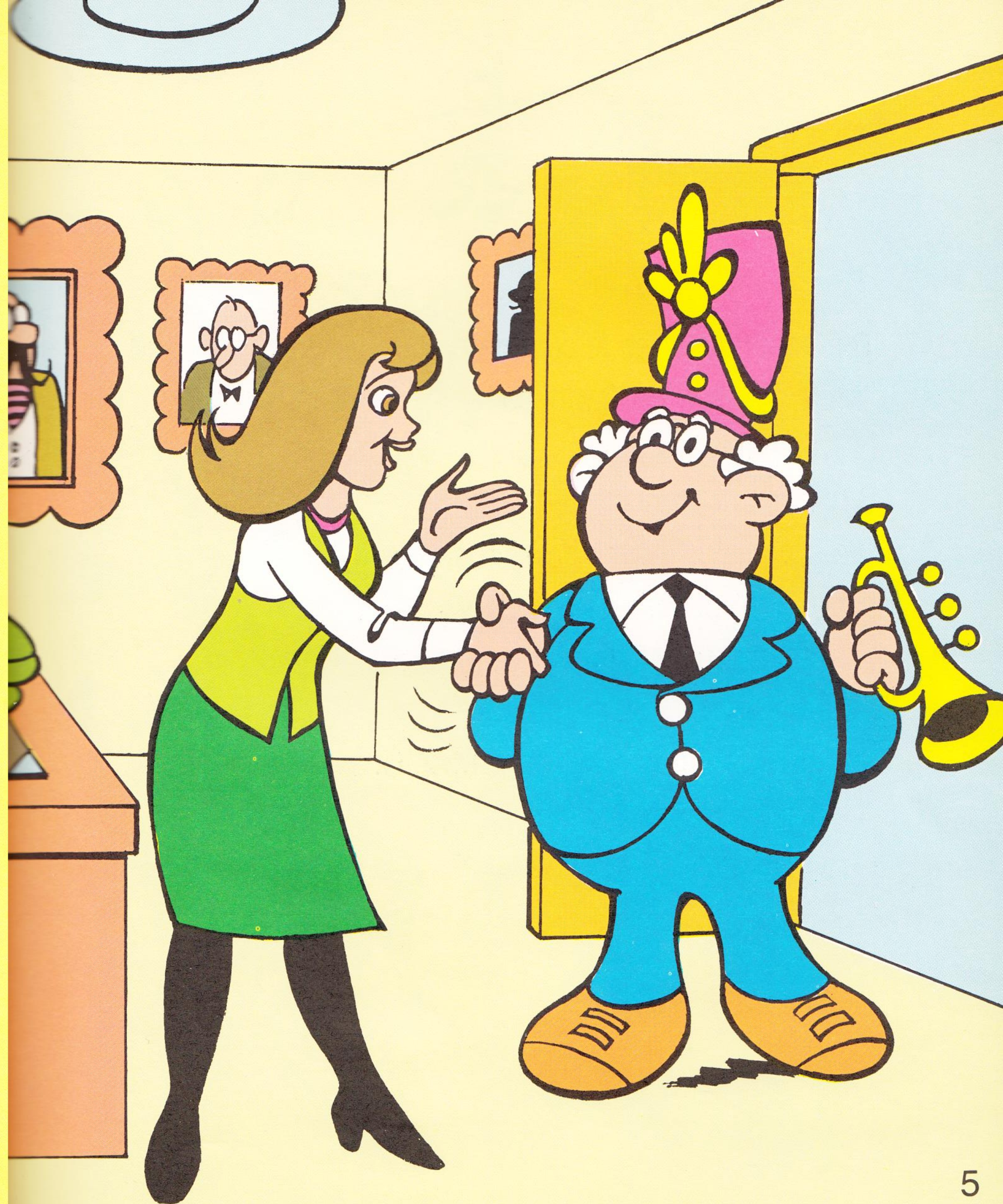
“No! No!” says the mayor, “Miss O is
a new letter person who can help everyone.

Miss O is an optimist.”

“An optimist!” says the band leader.

“What is an optimist?”

“I will ask Miss O to tell you,” says the mayor.



The next day, Miss O comes to see the marching band.

"Miss O," says the band leader, "the mayor said you can help us because you are an optimist. What is an optimist?"

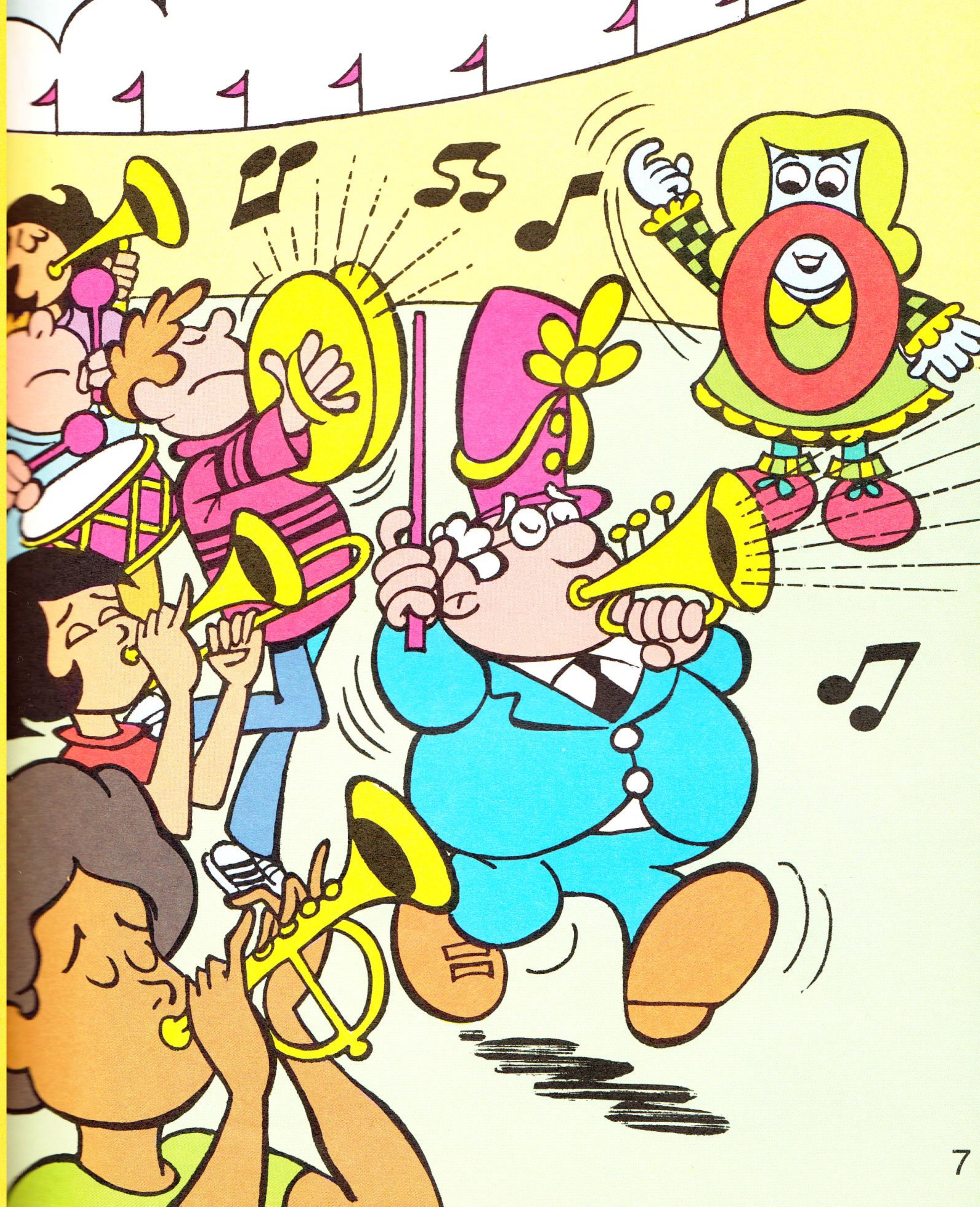
"An optimist is someone who always looks at the happy side of everything," smiles Miss O.

"We do not have a happy side to look at," says the band leader.

"An optimist finds one," says Miss O.

"Let me help you.

I have an idea."



“The mayor tells me you do not have money to buy new instruments and uniforms,” says Miss O.
“That is a problem, but there is a happy side. You can raise the money you need. You can have an omelet party and sell omelets.”
“We cannot make omelets,” say the band members.
“That is a problem,” says Miss O.
“But there is a happy side. I can make wonderful omelets. I will teach each of you.”
Suddenly, there are smiles on the faces of the band members.
“Miss O, you make us feel good inside,” they say.



Miss O and the band members prepare for the omelet party.

Olga, the opera singer, lets them have the party at her house.

Miss O makes many different omelets.

All the band members have fun helping her.

Ollie Octopus serves all the omelets.

"After all," says Ollie Octopus, "I can serve eight omelets at the same time."

Then, the band members change into their band uniforms and play marching music for the guests.

Soon, the guests leave.

The omelet party is a great success.



Miss O and the band members count the money they have raised.

"There is only enough money to buy new instruments," say the band members unhappily.

"Look at the happy side," says Miss O.

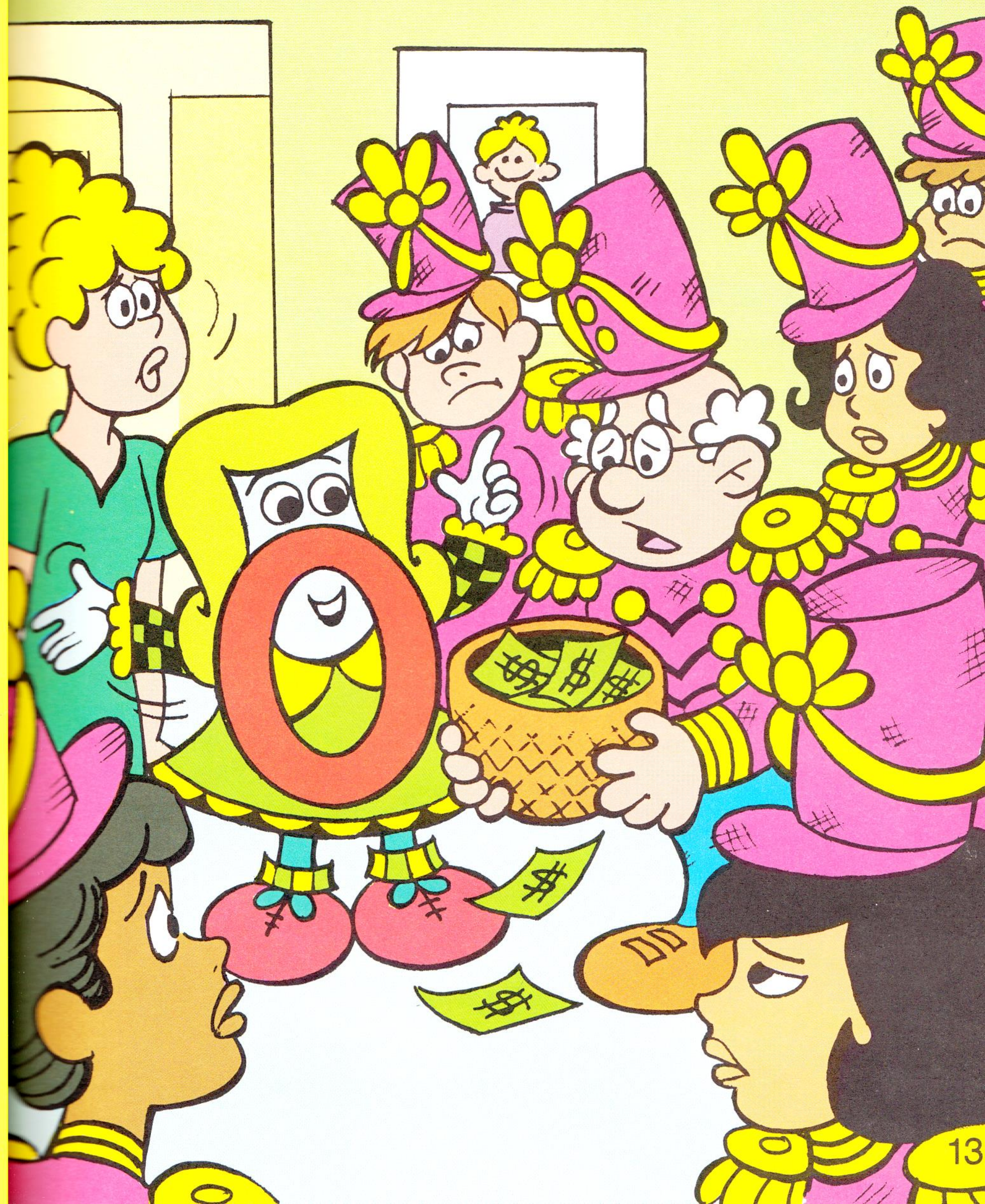
"You solved one of your problems.

Be bright and cheerful the way an optimist is.

Then you will be ready to solve your second problem."

"We want to be optimists," say the band members.

"But it is not always easy."



“I want to be an optimist too,” says Olga.

“I will try to find a happy side.

Listen to my idea.

When I was an opera star, I had to wear costumes again and again.

I could not keep buying new costumes.

I discovered a way to keep my costumes looking almost new.

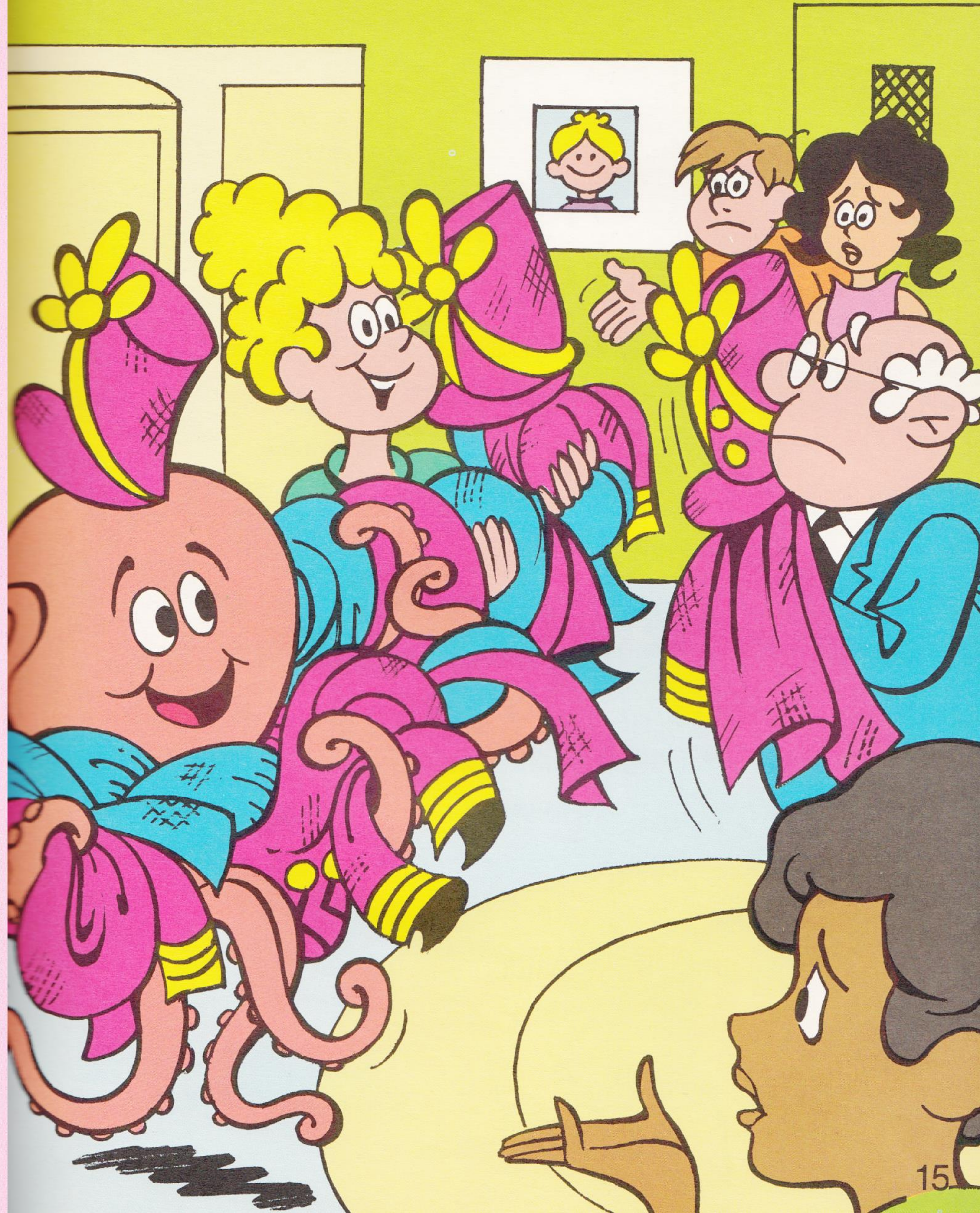
Leave all the band uniforms here with me.

I will make them look almost new.”

“I will help you,” says Ollie Octopus.

“Thank you, Olga,” say the band members.

“While you are working on the uniforms, we will try to find a special Halloween surprise.”



The next morning, Olga hangs each band uniform on her outdoor clothes line.

“First, I will let the air freshen the uniforms,” says Olga.

“Then, I will carefully starch and iron each one.”

Olga goes inside to practice her opera singing.

It starts to rain.

Olga is so busy singing she does not hear the rain.

Suddenly, she hears her doorbell ringing and ringing.

Olga rushes to the door.

There is Ollie Octopus, holding eight umbrellas.

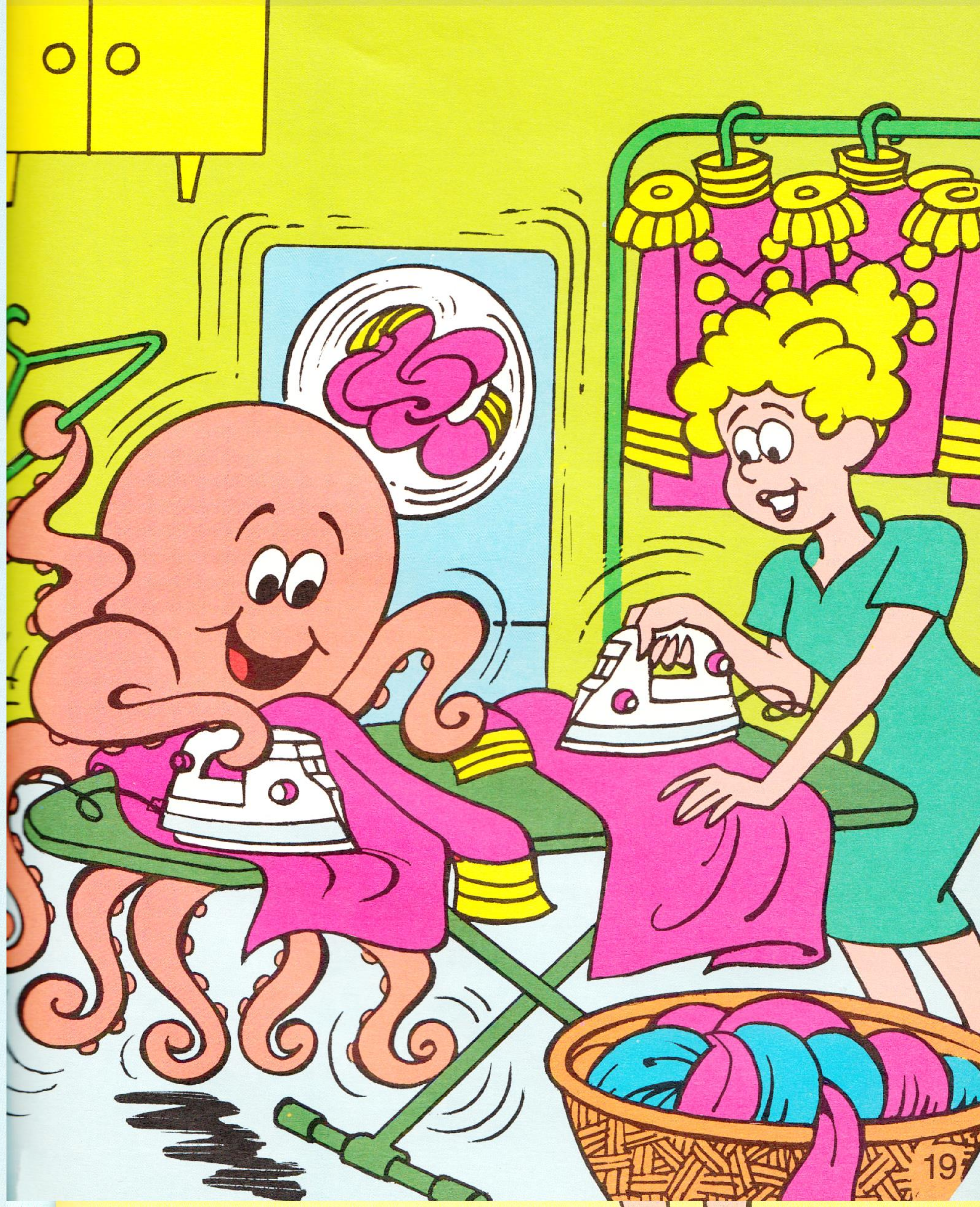
“I have come to help you with the uniforms,” says Ollie Octopus.

“The uniforms!” gasps Olga.

“They are hanging outdoors in the rain.”



Quickly, Olga and Ollie Octopus bring all the dripping, wet uniforms into the house. "Olga," says Ollie Octopus sadly, "we need Miss O. I don't think we can find a happy side." "Yes we can," says Olga. "We will put the uniforms into my indoor clothes drier." Olga and Ollie Octopus work and work. They dry each uniform. Then they iron each uniform. At last, they are finished. "The uniforms look almost new," says Olga proudly. "Being an optimist makes me feel good inside."



Soon, Miss O and the band members arrive.

"The uniforms look great," they say.

"Try on your jackets," says Miss O.

Suddenly, Olga hears, "Oh no! Oh dear! Oh my! None of the jackets fit," sigh the band members.

"They are all too small."

"I am afraid the rain and the clothes drier shrunk the uniforms," says Olga sadly.

"Do not be sad, Olga," say the band members.

"You were trying to help us.

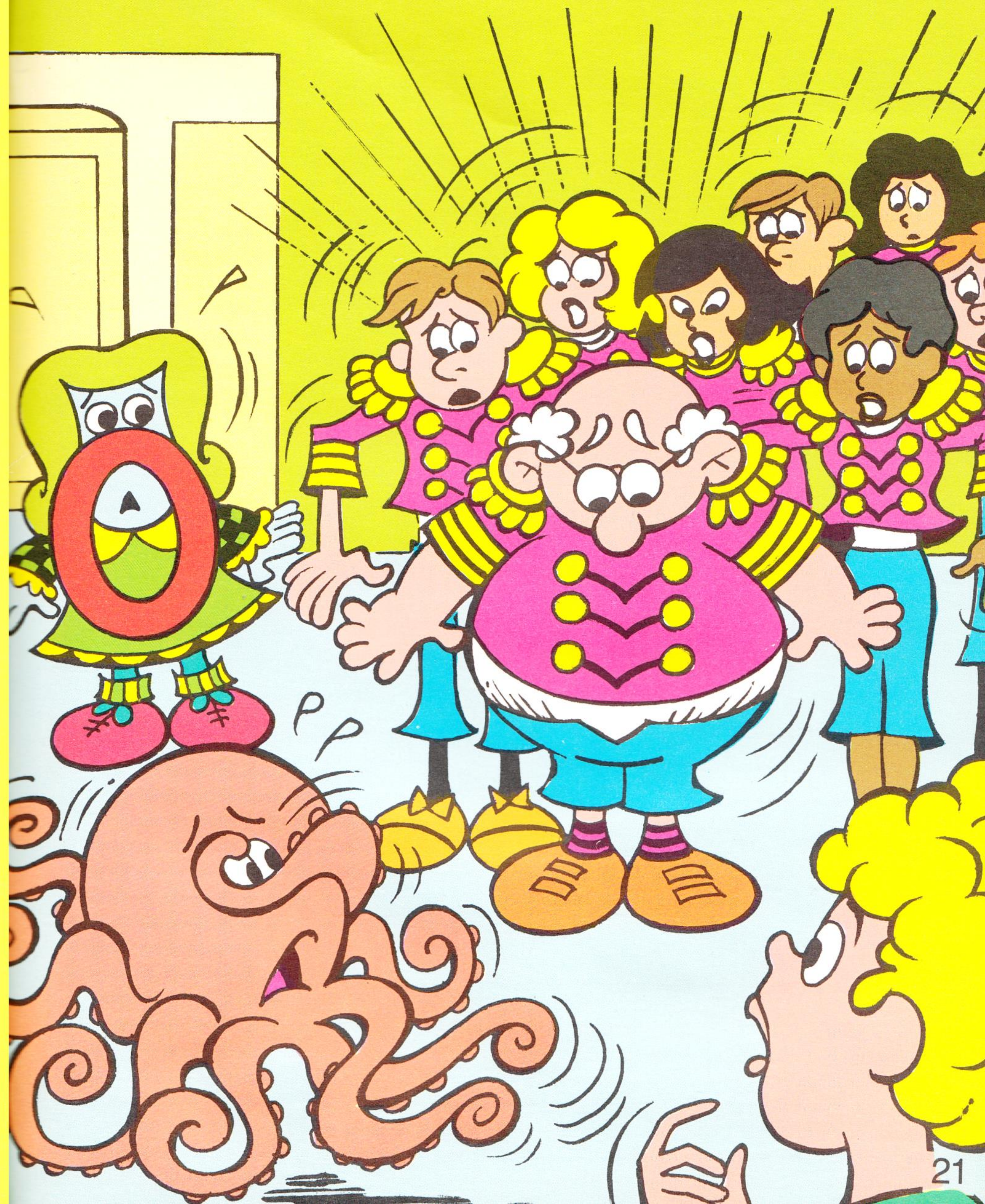
It doesn't matter.

We will not enter the contest this year.

We do not have uniforms.

We do not have a special Halloween surprise.

There isn't any happy side for us to look at."



“An optimist always looks at the happy side of everything,” says Miss O.
She whispers to Olga and Ollie Octopus.
They rush away.
They return carrying many, many costumes.
“These are the costumes Olga wore when she was an opera star,” says Miss O.
“I sang many different parts,” says Olga.
“I sang the parts of both men and women.”
“Look at the costumes,” says Miss O to the band members.
“Find a costume you would like to wear.”
“Wait, Miss O!” says the band leader.
“We know you want us to look at the happy side of everything.
But we need band uniforms, not opera costumes.”



Miss O smiles.

"I will show you the happy side," she says.
These costumes will solve all your problems.
You can wear the costumes as your
special Halloween surprise."

"That will solve one problem," says Ollie Octopus.

"If you wear the costumes, you do not need
band uniforms," says Olga.

"That will solve your last problem."

"Halloween is a time when many people wear costumes
and pretend they are someone else," says Miss O.

"You can each pretend to be someone in an opera,"
says Olga. "I will teach you to play opera music."

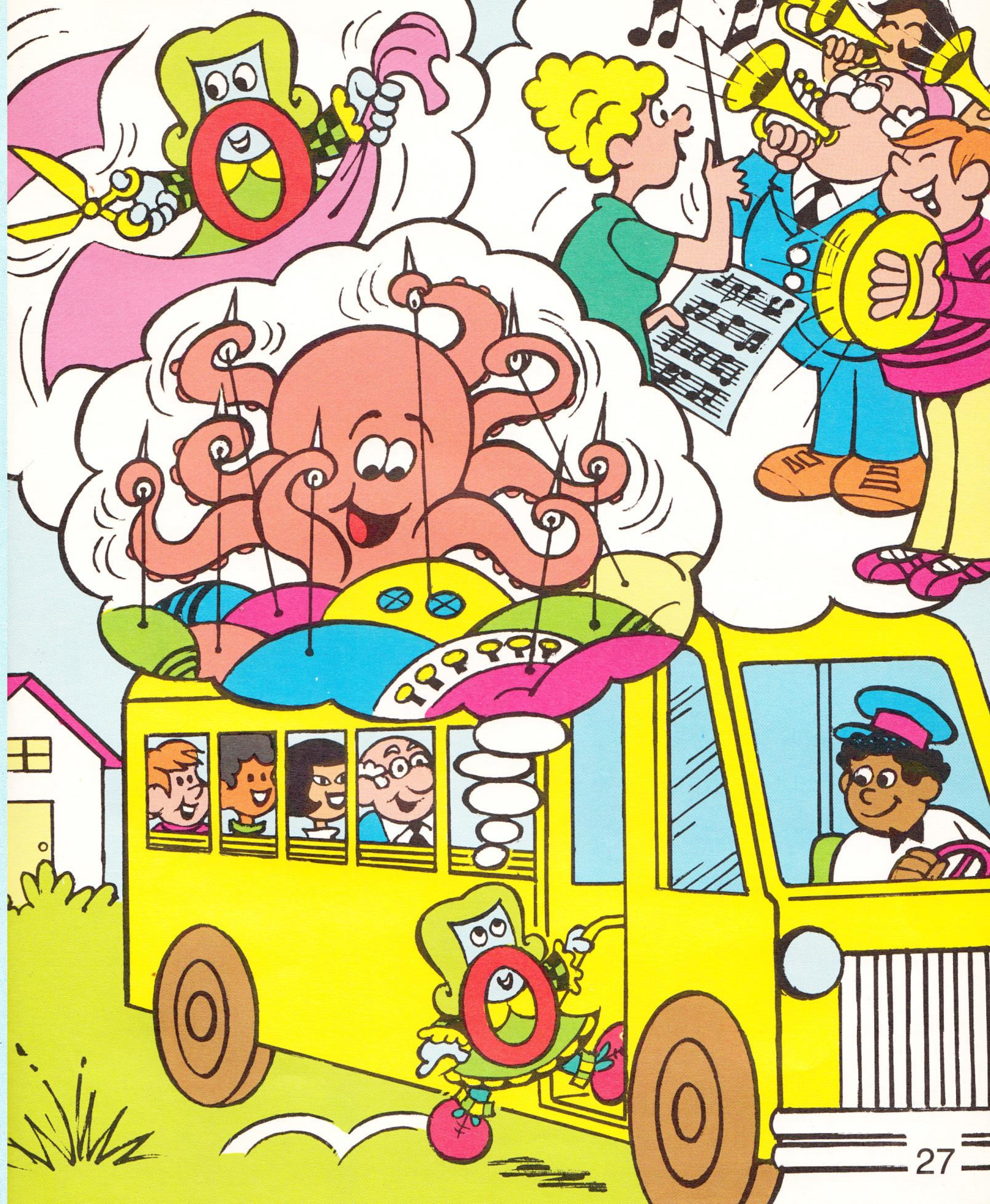
"I will dance as you play," says Ollie Octopus.

The band members laugh and laugh.

"A marching band, dressed in opera costumes, playing
opera music, will certainly be a surprise," they say.



Each band member selects a costume.
Miss O and Ollie Octopus work very hard.
They cut.
They sew.
Soon, each band member has a costume that fits.
Olga works very hard teaching opera music to the band.
It is not easy music for them to learn.
But they remember to keep looking at the happy side.
At last, it is Halloween, the day of
the marching-band contest.
The Letter People Land Band arrives at the
Ogdenville Stadium in a special bus.
“Stay on the bus until it is your turn
to perform,” says Miss O.
“Do not let anyone see you.”



Miss O goes into the stadium to watch the other marching bands perform. Each band is dressed in marching-band uniforms and plays marching band music. Each band has a Halloween surprise. The Letter People Land Band is the last band to perform. People gasp as they come into the stadium. The band plays. Ollie dances. People laugh. People clap. People cheer.





The judges are ready to present the awards.

“The award for playing the best marching-band music goes to the Ogdenville Band,” says a judge.

“However, we have a special award for the Letter People Land Band.

They have the very best Halloween surprise.”

“We have more than that,” smile the band members.

“We have Miss O, the very best optimist.”